Colleen Asper // to catch the sounds that

she can then give back with her own voice

This zine collects material from a 2021 performance made in collaboration with the atonal composer Julie Harting and a related 2026 installation produced for Baruch College's New Media Artspace. Or, perhaps, it collects material from an 8th century epic poem and a 21st century response.

An admittedly minor character in the history of responses to Ovid's "Echo and Narcissus," I entered the scene when I read a Spivak essay titled simply "Echo." The character of Narcissus circulates broadly in popular culture and is foundational for psychoanalysis, but this high-profile model of self-enclosure is only one half of a narrative dyad. Spivak introduced me to the other half: Echo.

Echo enters Ovid's tale when she uses her notorious loquaciousness to distract Hera while Zeus is cheating on her, and Hera subsequently curses Echo to only speak the last words she hears. Echo then meets Narcissus and falls in love. The way Ovid allows Echo's repetition of Narcissus's words to sometimes cleverly express her feelings and other times to cruelly deny them got me interested in Echo's predicament as a metaphor for the limits of language broadly—in which the question is not whether to repeat but how.

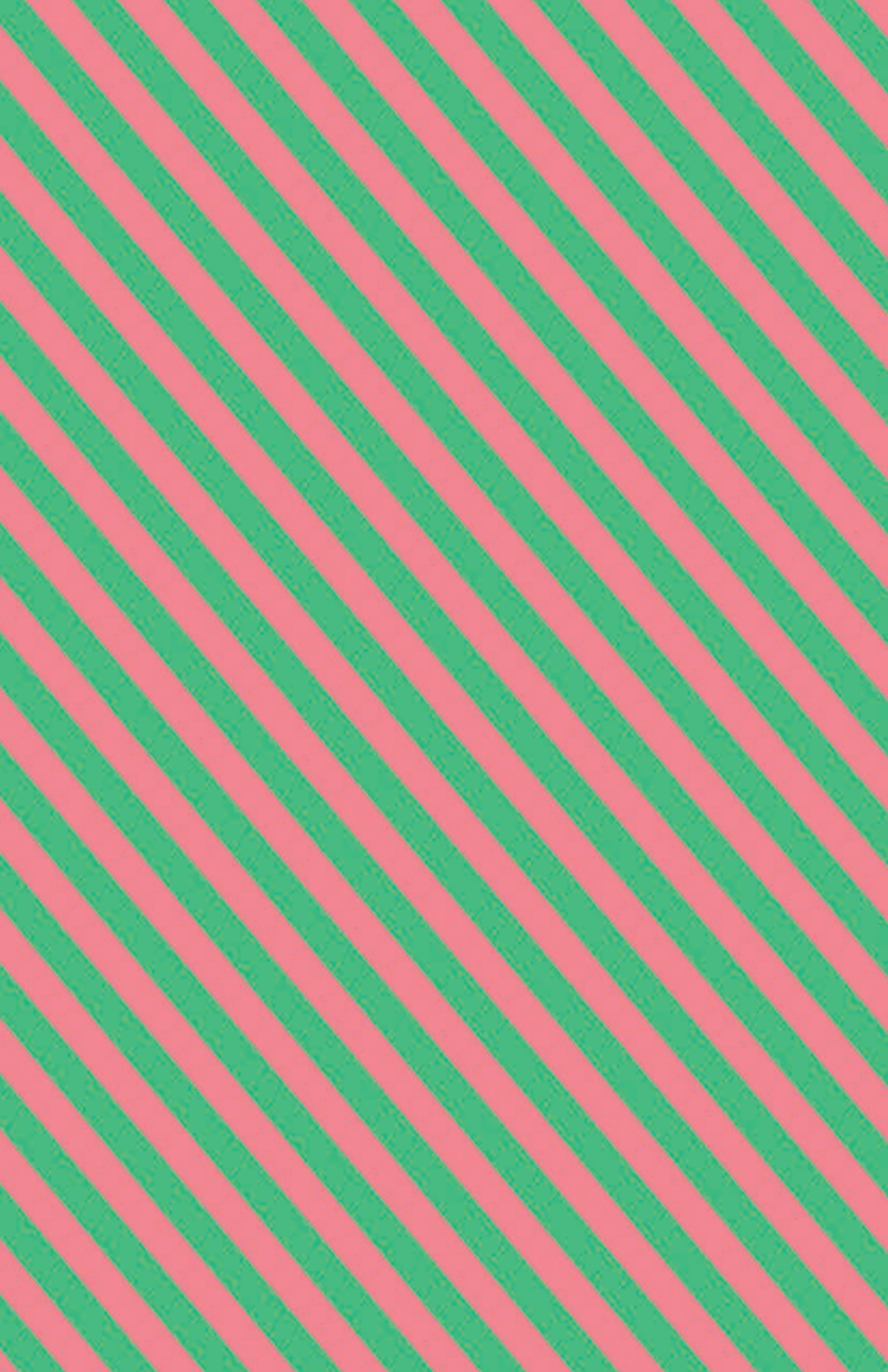
Spivak begins "Echo" by noting how for Freud and others the examples of narcissism are almost always to be found among women. She describes her essay as instead an attempt to "give woman" to Echo. My own intervention sees Echo and Narcissus as making up two sides of mimesis, reflection of the self and reflection of the other, but also auditory and visual mimesis. If Spivak charts the gendered aspects of the former mimesis, I am equally interested in the latter.

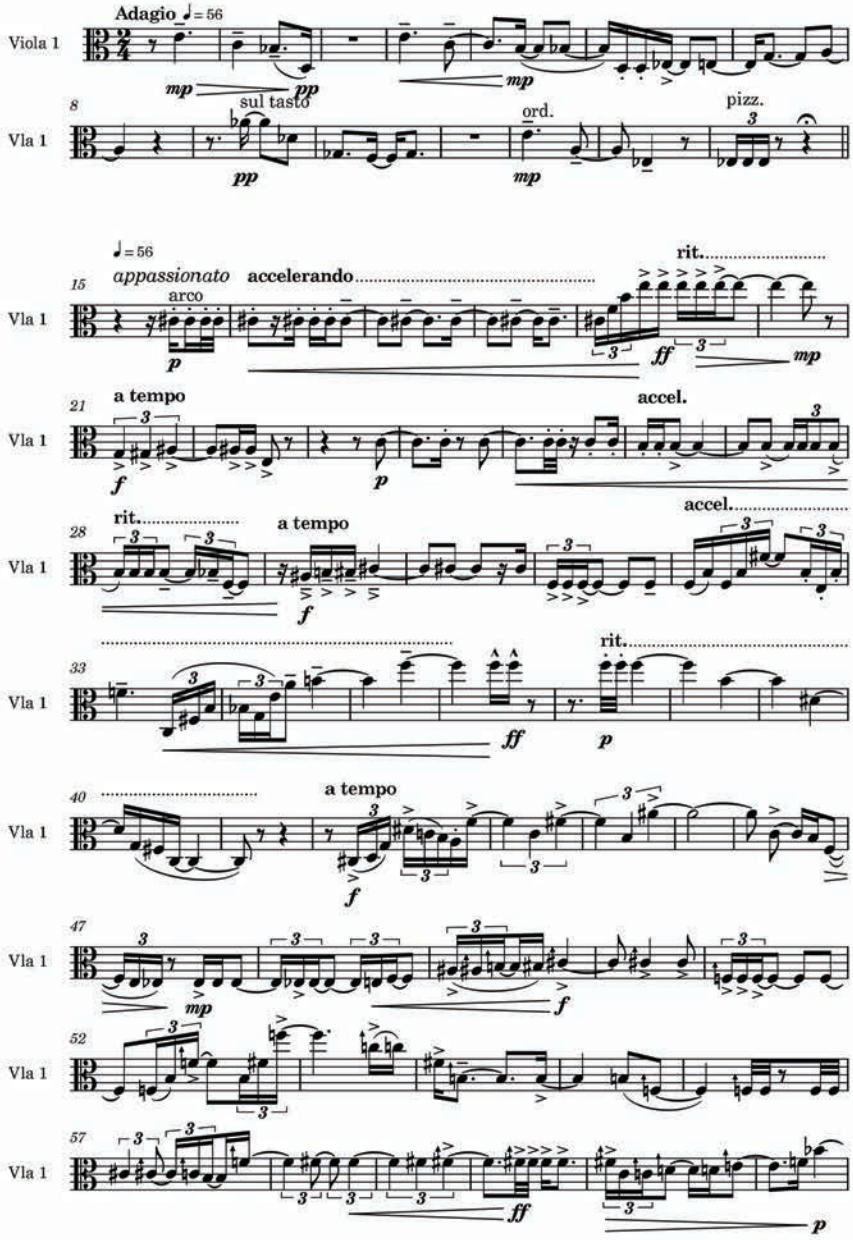
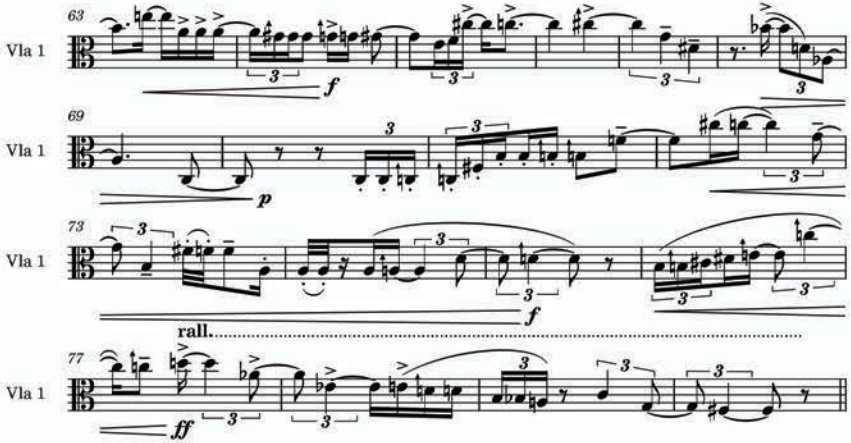
Film, that eminently mimetic medium, has historically been cast by feminist criticism as an instrument of the gaze, but Echo too whispers in its reels. This is where Julie Harting makes her entrance. Our proto-cinematic performance places two of my paintings on a freestanding wall, one of an ear and one of a mouth in the negative space of the ear; both paintings have slits cut into them. I am standing behind the wall rolling through scrolls of striped fabric. Each time I get to the end of a roll, I am visible and I read part of a text I wrote about Echo. The striped fabric alternates moiré

pattern and grid as it is seen behind the slits in the paintings. These patterns and the colors they use correspond to the music composed for the piece by Julie Harting, which, like any good talkie, plays live during the performance.

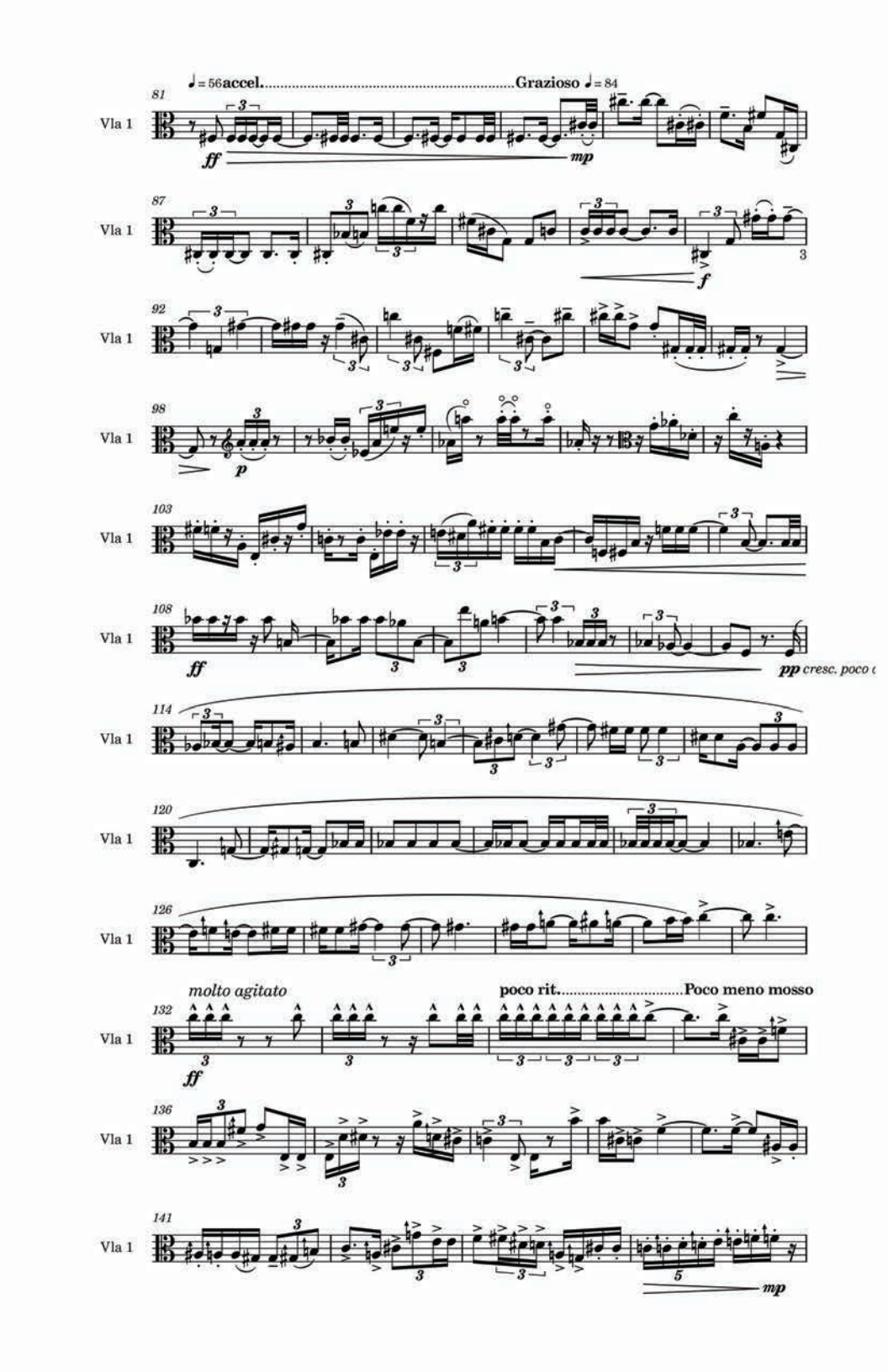
In revisiting this piece for a new context, I realized I still had questions about what, exactly, it means to repeat. This is where 22 artists, poets, translators, writers, and other thinkers enter the scene, all of whom I asked the question "How do you think about repetition in your work?" Their answers, along with the combined score and script from my performance with Julie Harting, are the contents of this zine.

–Colleen Asper



Echo: Anticipating Mouth, Answering Ear

TACET-SPOKEN TEXT

Before Echo echoed, she was a sophist. Not, exactly, in the sense of an ancient Greek philosopher—she had no pupils and her role in the division of labor of the polis wasn't to produce and maintain the measure of wisdom that the ruling class could afford. And not, exactly, in the modern sense—her cleverness was not gathered only to swaddle a stillborn idea, or to deliver an arrow pointing away from her argument. Rather, Echo was a sophist in the sense that language opened itself completely for her. For Echo the word was the thing and each word was right. When she spoke, she didn't give form to a prior idea, she thought in speech and of speech and she left no gap for the listener to misunderstand or interpret. Each sentence popped like a blueberry in the tart yogurt of her mouth.

Or maybe Echo was a gossip. Someone attentive to the moisture squeezed out of the official account, who knows what we are eager to hear but ashamed to ask. A trader in marginal knowledge, a messenger whose missives are always hot. Echo's tongue darted and slid across the social until she found its belly, and its belly found her bite. At least that is what Ovid would have us believe. He describes Echo's loquaciousness, her gift of gab, as aiding Zeus when he was cheating on Hera by providing the cover needed for his mistress's escape. I picture a nymph hastily re-draping her gossamer wrap while Echo prattles on to Hera about the nature of truth, or who has a crush on who.

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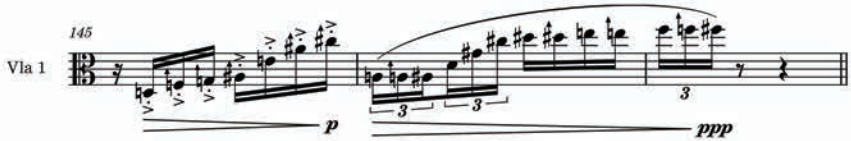
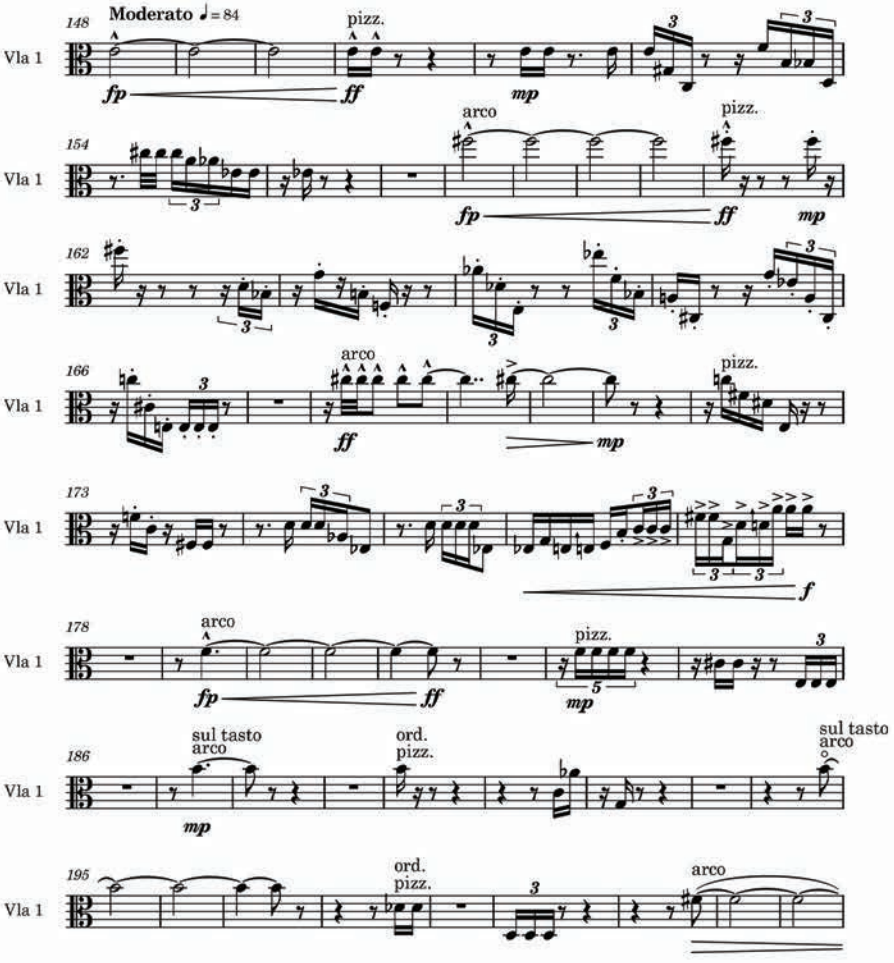
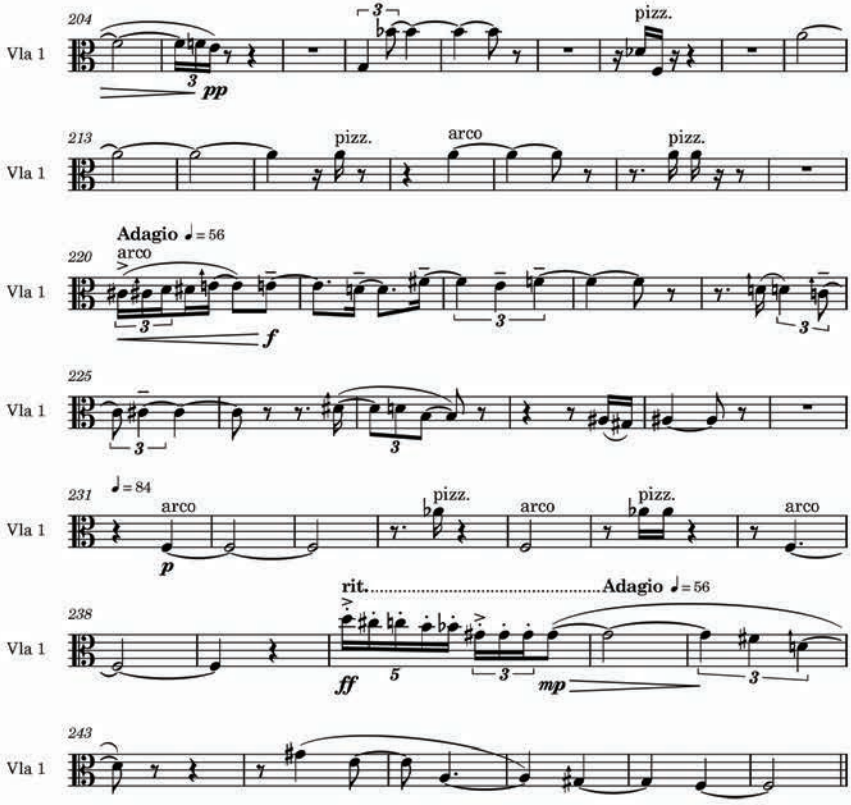

TACET-SPOKEN TEXT

There is a line of scholarship that argues that Hera was the goddess of a matriarchal people inhabiting Greece before the Hellenes, but in Greek mythology she largely plays the jealous wife, the ball and chain necessary for Zeus's transgression. Imagining Hera as a shrew is one way to make Echo's deceit more palatable, but I still find this betrayal of one woman by another disturbing. My impulse is to find a sympathetic reason why Echo shielded Zeus. Perhaps Echo was an unwitting double agent, hired by Hera to spy on Zeus when she had already been hired by Zeus to thwart Hera's investigation. Caught between opposing loyalties, what escapes is speech. Echo doesn't tell on Zeus, but she doesn't keep his affair concealed for long either. When Hera finds out about Echo's trickery, the wrath that should be directed at Zeus falls on Echo. Like any good detective, Echo takes the fall for her client.

Or perhaps Echo is the femme fatale, that classic figure of noir that paradoxically practices transparency only in her obvious and usually self-announced relationship to deception. Echo with a slender cigarette dangling from a gloved hand, appearing just in time to make a third whenever a couple is in danger of forming. Her tongue, as Plutarch said of Cleopatra, "an instrument of many strings." And like any femme fatale, or mortal who intervenes in the affairs of the gods, Echo is punished. "From now on you'll not have much use of that voice that tricked me so," promises Hera. Echo is doomed to repeat and in doing so becomes an auditory mimic, an analyst just behind the couch fated to always replay back to the client the last thing they said.

But does transference ever happen for the analyst? Echo finds her double but not her match in Narcissus, whose relationship to repetition is visual rather than auditory. Echo loves Narcissus, and Narcissus loves Narcissus. Echo is a voyeur silently watching

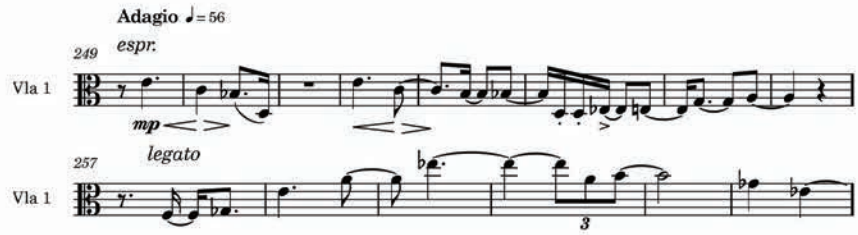
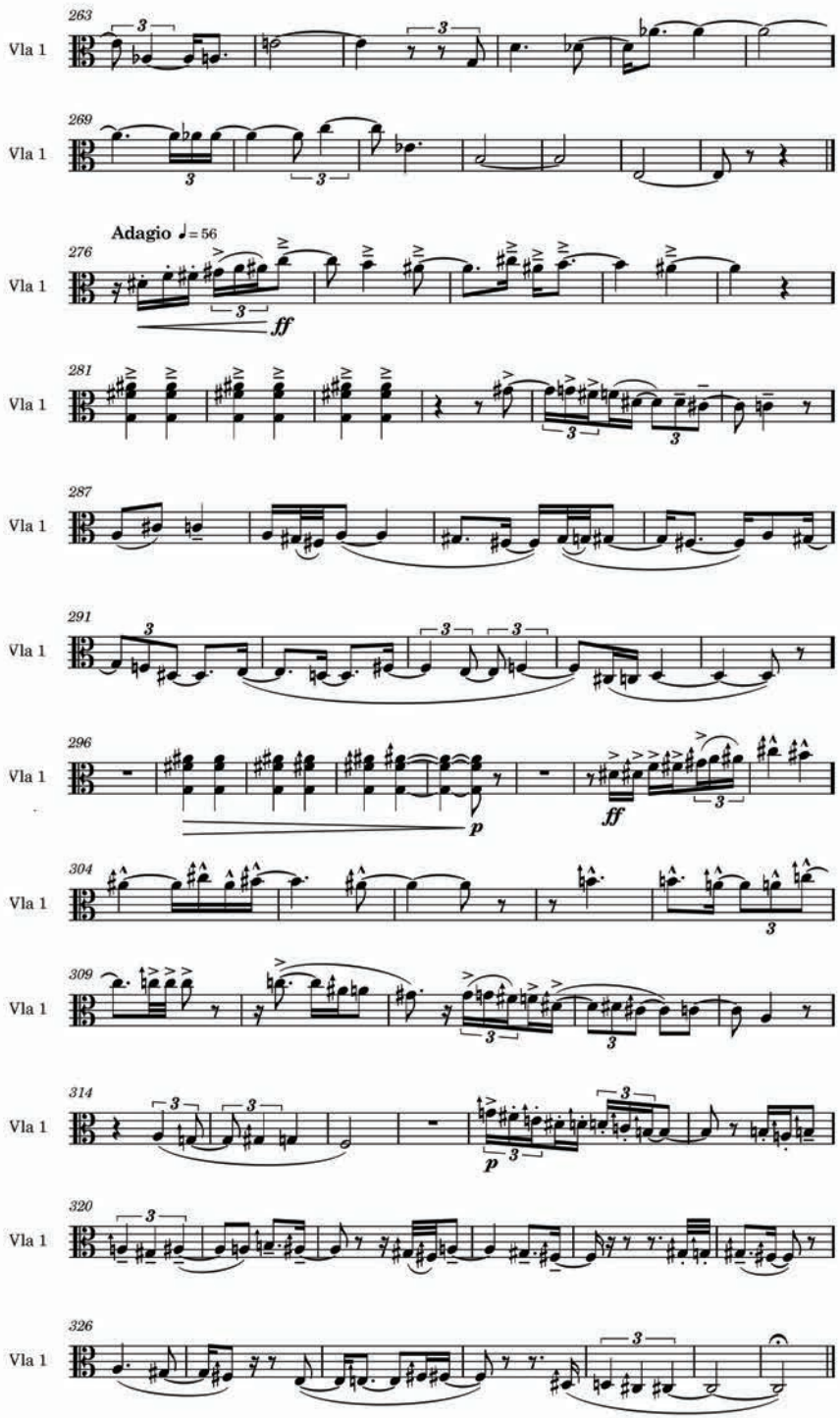
Narcissus until Narcissus cries out, "Is anyone nearby?" "Nearby," answers Echo. Back and forth they go, with Echo's repetition sometimes serendipitously expressing her feelings and other times cruelly denying them. The misunderstanding this produces would make the perfect meet-cute if this were a romantic comedy. Instead, it's the prelude to a tragedy. When Echo finally reveals herself, Narcissus exclaims, "I'd sooner die then say I'm yours." "I'm yours," Echo replies, opening herself up to grief that will eventually consume her body.

TACET-SPOKEN TEXT

In *Touching Feeling* Eve Sedgwick writes that the bodily responses that accompany shame first appear just after an infant has become able to recognize the face of its caregiver and in the moment when a circuit of mirroring breaks down. The baby laughs, the caregiver laughs; the caregiver smiles, the baby smiles. If the caregiver fails to repeat the baby's expression, the baby will avert their eyes, put their head down, or blush—signaling that before shame is defined by prohibition, it's a response to being cast out of a of loop of representation.

Echo's last entreaty won't be met by any return of Narcissus's gaze—their tête-à-tête immediately precedes his encounter with the lake and his own image, famously making of him a mime trapped

in the mirror stage. The lake produces a perfect reflection, categorically refusing depth, and it is precisely this lack that has created a boundless surface for metaphors central both to psychology and queer theory. But I am still interested in Echo. Narcissus does indeed die rather than belong to Echo, but she reappears, or at least resounds, to repeat his final word: "farewell." She repeats too the choir of grief at Narcissus's passing. The circuit of Narcissus's mirroring becomes airtight, while Echo's proliferates.

This is not a broken love triangle, so much as it is a methodology for survival. Romantic comedy is founded on the faith that misunderstanding is essentially benevolent, with each missed encounter an unwitting baby step towards a mirroring so complete it offers total fusion. And they lived happily ever after, the end. In film noir it's understanding that is deadly and therefor the heat of the narrative is generated by forestalling it for as long as possible. If only we could live in misunderstanding, perhaps we could live in love. I find the ending of every narrative suspect. Echo survives as a curiously disembodied embodiment of the circularity of myth over narrative precisely because she sends every ending spiraling into multiplicity.

Like Echo, I have the impulse to repeat. Mimesis is an intensely felt pleasure in not being the thing. Like the infant, I'm flooded with shame when my caregivers refuse to give me face. Representation plays peek-a-boo. Like the femme fatale, I want to make a face that kills. Repetition is not just the maintenance of a social circuit, the propagation of a norm, it's a strategy of defamiliarization, a way to take what's known and give it back as the sound of an impossible color. Echo is an always one more.

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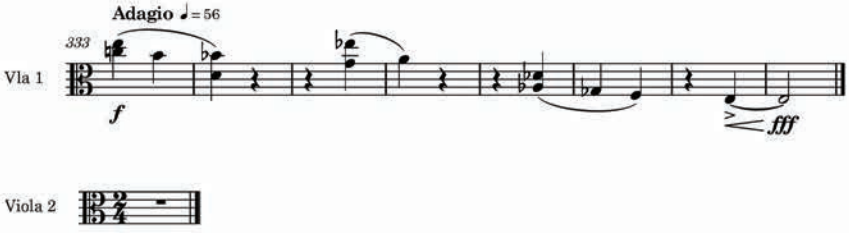
TACET-NO SPOKEN TEXT/ JUST SCROLLING TEXTILE

How do you think about repetition in your work?

Didier William: Repetition is redrawing, revisiting, remapping, remaking, over and under and next to.

How do you think about repetition in your work?

C. Luke Soucy: The cover of *The Little Book of Second Mentions* shows a large, yellow, perfectly ripe banana. Pasted across its peel like a fridge magnet collage are the banana's collected journalistic alter egos—"the bendy breakfast staple," "the potassium-packed produce"—each cleverly contrived and thoroughly stupid.

With its giveaway subtitle "the art of avoiding repetition," *Second Mentions* has joined *Terrible Maps* and *50 Ways to Kill a Slug* in my pantheon of favorite stocking-stuffers, though not because I think I'm outside its sights. It took conscious effort two sentences ago not to write "the fruit's collected journalistic alter egos." And where the *fruit* stands in for the synonym-free banana, can the *oblong yellowish fruit* be far behind?

Of course, this is repetition viewed at the granular level of diction, but that is the level to which epic poets pull their translators. A rhetorical device called *antonomasia* (literally, "naming otherwise") runs rampant in ancient narrative verse, absolving the storyteller from writing "Mercury" every other line while cursing the modern reader to check who "Cyllenius," "Atlantiades," or the "Caduceus-bearer" might be—unless the translator, as most do, has spared them. Conversely, differences between languages' lexicons can drive a translator toward greater repetition. Latin seems to have endless words for *kill*, or *sea*, or *horse*, and deploys them blithely in a single passage. But how many ways can you say *horse* in English? Steeds? Mounts or chargers? Equids? *Quadrupeds*? How do you feel about "the deep" standing in for the sea? How about Davy Jones's locker? Decisions like these have defining effects on the register and tone of your translation—which, given that the content is already set, are largely what translation is about.

And what about Ovid? I'm hardly the first to note that the verb he uses to describe Echo's mode of speech is not *repetere* but *reddere*. While it doesn't *not* mean to repeat, *reddere* at its core means to give back. In a poem about change, it's a striking way to characterize what might seem like static iteration. Echo does not merely copy the words of others; in her courtship of Narcissus, in her later lament for him, and even as her flesh wastes away, she turns others' words into a resource for her own expression, giving them back with her intention and in her voice.

One often hears that translation is no substitute for the original; yet as David Bellos wryly wrote, that's exactly what it is. Every word of the original has been wiped off the page, replaced by ones the translator has deemed semantically and literarily fit to create the right series of echoes. To read a translation is to trust an individual writer to gather the roses from a foreign garden and, through their own mysterious creative process, find the right words to give them all back.

How do you think about repetition in your work?

yuniya edi kwon: In one theory of the universe (*conformal cyclic cosmology* by Roger Penrose), the universe iterates through infinite cycles, each called an *aeon*. At the infinite end of one aeon, particles decay until they vanish from existence, and all mass and scale disappear. This is called the *remote future*. The qualities of a remote future are conformally equivalent to that of a big bang. So . . . bang. And an infinite cycle continues. No beginning, no end.

Super massive black holes will likely be the last bodies to dissolve, the last activity in each remote future. As they diminish, black holes exhale gravitational waves. These waves are circular and massless, and they contain and transmit information from one aeon to the next. We see evidence of this inter-aeon transmission in the earliest moments of our current universe: circular rings of massive galaxies that are impossibly huge for their age. Possible only if they were seeded with information from the previous aeon's gravitational waves.

I think of my work as a collection of miniature aeons, a nesting doll of expansions, cycles, memories, and reverberations, where life emerges and dissolves with equal force, and where impressions carry through and seed the next evolutions. In this way, repetition is not an approach, but an inevitability. In this way, I remove the impossible burden of newness in favor of a seamless continuity.

How do you think about repetition in your work?

Elvia Wilk: Writing is physically taxing. Because the repetitive strain of typing and clicking has ruined my shoulders and neck, I have an ergonomic desk setup that I can't stray from. I look like a gamer. Big monitor, special keyboard, weird-looking mouse, ugly but supportive chair. I can't take a laptop to the cafe. I can't work on the sofa. I like to think that having one place to work helps me know when I'm working and when I'm stopping.

Every day I look at Microsoft Word documents. I repeat the same two-dozen actions, toggling views, adding and subtracting, moving and rearranging. Tracking Changes into eternity. I feel I will be tracking my fucking changes in Word documents until the day I die. Sometimes I think of my entire life as an endless scrolling document with changes tracked.

Last year I realized that, after fifteen years supporting myself by writing, editing, and teaching, I had no daily writing practice of my own anymore. I write most days: assignments, uncountable emails. But I wasn't a *practicing* artist anymore. The practice got lost in all those documents and file folders. Practice is process and not product. Because I produce words for consumption in exchange for money, and because the money is scarce, I've gotten very good at insisting I get paid. This insistence perversely bound me tightly to the idea of words as "worth"—my words without compensation became worthless, unworthy. And so, I stopped practicing for the sake of it. I fell away from any notion of doing it for the motion, the joy, the experiment, the habit, the sensation.

Partly, I fell out of practice because writing at the desk is so repetitive that I don't want to do any more than I have to. So I started writing by hand, because it is a different kind of manual labor. I hadn't handwritten in years because I much prefer efficiency: I like to write as fast as I think; I like having all of my notes searchable and my changes trackable.

For five months I have been writing three pages by hand each day. Three is an arbitrary number of pages—it's probably inspired by *The Artist's Way*. On those pages I sometimes work out an idea that I realize I want to type into a "real" document, but mostly I just document what's happening to me and figure out what I'm thinking. Figuring out what you think is . . . the entire point of writing. This sacred daily repetition has changed me because I cannot easily put it to use; it is by nature opaque, separate from the screen where the rest of my work happens, and private. As for the other 23-odd hours of my day, I'm a worker like any other, trawling the margins of Word docs and cleaning them up.

How do you think about repetition in your work?

Jen Liu: Repetition shows up frequently in my work as a principle of temporal labor exploitation, and to express questions that cannot be answered, no matter how many times each question is asked.

How do you think about repetition in your work?

Jennifer Kabat: I had wanted to write about repetition as hope. But I can't. I don't have it in me. Cycles, circles, spirals are my work. I am ruled more by seasons than years. I have come to them because sentences, plots, narratives, chronologies, calendars all carry the promises of eschatology, progress, colonialism, capitalism (the neoliberal dream of the end of history) . . . I have turned to the

past (s) to find radical uprisings that can echo and carry hope into our moment. Progress is the mindset of capitalism, and to see radical moments spring up again and again, repeating refrains and ideas—even specific words—means they are never over but always here for us. And also the opposite of "progress." Lately, I have been thinking, writing, of radical rural traditions from the 1640s, from Gerard Winstanley and the Diggers up. Up through specific years like Thomas Spence in 1775 or Thomas Paine in 1797, or the Chartist Land Plan in the 1840s, or Bolton Hall's Back-to-the-Land movement in the 1910s, or my own family and parents and community where the language and ideas repeat and repeat and repeat.

And yet. Here in this moment, I am hopeless.

I think about how I repeat things, how ideas repeat in me sometimes unbearably, how I repeat my parents and try to change them, how time is a repetition vs. a line. And here now I am stuck on: the Know-Nothings and their intentional stupidity as a front for violence and racism in the 1850s, the state sanctioned racism of the 1920s and wondering what scar that left on my family—the only immigrant Jewish family in a small rural town. I think of anarchists and bombs in the 1880s, and how in this moment they make sense, of a socialist uprising in my town, which is a place built on a floodplain where the first trees on earth emerged and that now floods regularly. Those first trees led to a mass extinction, and that feels like prefigurement, echoing our own time. After all, trees too are intelligent and communicate.

And yet.

And yet.

How do you think about repetition in your work?

Amaryllis R Flowers: One time, for a long time (forever?), I went crazy. The only time I could sit still was when my hands were in

clay. It's known that craft practices have a reparative function, soothing the impacts of trauma through repetition and embodied making. Here, repetition is repair, closing a loop and echoing that closure through the nervous system to complete a brain circuit which, somehow, exploded.

Later, while learning the nerikomi technique—the process of cutting apart differently colored bodies of clay and reassembling them into patterned blocks—I was also undergoing Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), which is rooted in dialectics. Dialectics, as I understand it, is the philosophical study of contradictions and the spaces between them. As DBT founder Marsha M. Linehan describes, "When you ask people, 'what do you get when you mix black and white,' most people say 'gray,' but in dialectics you get plaid." Nerikomi operates as a physical enactment of this philosophy. To make these figures I cut apart different bodies of clay, slicing, warping, and scraping them into many pieces, then reassembling them into unpredictable patterns. I'm making new blocks from a tedious process of fragmentation and reformation. Here, repetition is a kaleidoscope.

The fragments become the patterns which repeat to become the building blocks which repeat to become the irreverent, mutable, weird bodies that change irreversibly with time. Unable to become themselves without containing their opposites.

How do you think about repetition in your work?

Susan Morrow: Excerpt from Gerhard Ulrich Anton Vieth, *Versuch einer Encyklopädie der Leibesübungen* 2 [Attempt at an Encyclopedia of Physical Exercises, Vol. 2] (1795)

"There are people who have their facial muscles (and thus the movements of their face, their countenances) admirably under their control, whereas for others these are almost involuntarily subject to the heart's feeling. Having someone undertake exercises with the muscles of the face would in a certain way mean teaching the elementary principles of the art of dissembling. Granting that

this is sometimes useful, it can yet more often do harm, and we thus wish to leave these exercises to those whose profession requires a voluntary command of their facial features—among them, for example, actors. They say of Garrick that, through exercise, he had his facial expressions under his control to an incredible degree. He once rode in a hired carriage. While en route, he climbs out, runs beside the vehicle, and asks the coachman to take him along. The latter didn't recognize him, so much had he transformed himself, and he told him to climb in if it pleased the gentleman in the coach. He repeated this joke a couple of times. A proof of how far man can take things even in these matters. I myself have known a person who, when holding his flat hand to his face so that it made a partition between the two halves, could fully look like someone crying on the one side and someone laughing on the other, and who could at the same time look upwards with one eye and downwards with the other—things that are impracticable for the common man due to the harmony of the muscles on both, similar halves of the face."

Gerhard Ulrich Anton Vieth, *Versuch einer Encyklopädie der Leibesübungen* 2. System der Leibesübungen (Berlin: Bei Carl Ludwig Hartmann, 1795), 62–63. [Translation my own]

How do you think about repetition in your work?

Justin Lieberman: First as tragedy, then as farce . . .
Those who cannot remember the past . . .
But finally: All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.

I hate to repeat myself. It's most embarrassing when someone who has heard me say something must hear me say it again for the benefit of someone who hasn't heard it. I know I must be boring them because I am boring myself.

Language is maybe the most embarrassing medium for repetition. For instance, repetition in painting immediately refers to something else, like difference, or industrial production. What presents itself

shamefully as plagiarism in language takes on the sexy criminality of forgery in painting. Without repetition, most music would simply not exist. I always tell students they must do it again. There are obvious reasons: formalization, refinement. Also questionable reasons, like discipline. The arguments against repetition are always spurious, "spontaneity," "authenticity." Nevertheless . . .

This attitude of mine is without a doubt the reason why my German remains at the level of a small child after 11 years living in the country. I can't bear repeating myself and I also can't bear my own inarticulate blather. After all, I know how to speak! I was known for being well-spoken! But I will never resolve the latter until I get over the former. There are endless versions of tables of tenses for learning German, which sort the words into categories whose logic is so full of exceptions as to render them arbitrary. To some extent, one can use an etymological approach. But the meanings themselves are often unavailable in English. Or at least they are not zuhandenheit. Haha. Rote repetition is the only way.

In art school, repetition can really start to become eine Nervensäge. How many times will I have the same concepts presented to me as if they are novel? For how many years? It seems as though an eternally empty carrier bag of fiction must be presented to me at least five times a year. No offense to Le Guin, of course. The same must be said about Haraway's knowledges, eternally situated somewhere else. For me, Benjamin's mechanical reproduction now evokes a machine employed by Adorno's culture industry that continually stamps out topical papers about itself. Even writing these remarks is almost unbearable, because they've been said so many fucking times.

Sometimes, one travels to a place and is surprised by the ubiquity of some banal item. For me it was a pig shaped water balloon in Venice, thrown into the air by street vendors on every corner. The pig would land with a splat and then slowly reform itself. There was also some kind of helicopter with lights on it. After one day in the city, it was invisible to me. It had become a mantra. But I bought one at the end of my trip anyway and when I returned home, it was the only one there.

How do you think about repetition in your work?

Abby Kluchin: When I was younger, I used to hate saying the same thing over and over again or listening to someone repeat themselves—in class, in life, in general. It doesn't bother me anymore. These days I find something consoling in repetition, the variations on a theme that make up a person's life-work and that retroactively tie that flimsy thing we call the self into something approaching coherence.

How do you think about repetition in your work?

Bronwyn Roe: I've used myself as a model for nearly every single one of my paintings and drawings. I've nevertheless maintained that these are not self-portraits. I don't think you can reduce a portrait to merely a person's likeness. There must be an intent of depicting and communicating something beyond the surface of the person's image, be it symbolic or psychological. I never felt like I was trying to capture an inner truth about myself when I made my work. As a matter of fact, it is only the image of myself that I use, not anything deeper. At least, that's what I've been telling myself. On the other hand, the persistent repetition of the same model, the artist, me, signals to the viewer and myself that, perhaps, the Gordian knot of subjecthood is in fact at the heart of my art.

Lacan devised a concept he called méconnaissance, fundamental to the development of the subject. I find this concept useful when thinking about my art. Essentially, what the term describes is the formation of an illusion of a unified and homogenous self in defiance of the exquisitely heterogeneous and chaotic material world of the body. In other words, we are continuously bombarded by new sensations and stimuli, triggering affective currents that ebb and flow, crash, collide, drip, and dry up; every cell in our body dies and is replaced daily. Eventually, our entire material body will die too, becoming raw energy for the earth's many microbes. And yet, every day we get up and look in the mirror and we immediately recognize a face, a body that we call "I." What a miraculous mirage.

We've all had moments where we've said to ourselves, "I don't feel like myself today," when our illusion shows signs of fracture. Most of us muddle through this feeling and eventually find our way back. But sometimes these fractures prove themselves too sizable for our run-of-the-mill patch jobs and our usual salve feels more like a kludge. I'd argue that this illusion of self is more tenuous than we'd like to admit. As someone with bipolar disorder, fragility and illusiveness have always been built into the self-illusion. For me, it's as if my illusion never claimed to be anything but. Compound this with gender (I'm a woman) and the fact that our late-stage capitalist world is itself a fractured hall of mirrors, and one can imagine the difficulty in staking claim to our own images. So, I suppose, my works are not so much self-portraits as they are repetitive iterations of a rogue image of selves, arrested in moments of unbounded fantasies and neurotic visions—the un-homogeneous selves, the ones I don't or only sometimes call "me."

How do you think about repetition in your work?

Dushko Petrovich Córdova: Singular and superlative images are fine, I enjoy them as much as anyone, but I always prefer to work within, around, and against, a type.

For some reason that stays just out of my mind's reach, I am interested in images that seem to gather themselves together, and I am most interested in what to me is a new type. In this way, I am kind of like a trend spotter, except I don't really care about the trendiness part. I care about the emergence of something, which has to be both different enough to be noticeable, and then repeated, with similarity establishing the type as a type. This might sound semi-scientific, but I experience it emotionally, as a detective or an enamored adolescent might. *Is there something going on here? Is this—a thing?*

My process of image collection and analysis, which is the foundation of both my essay writing and my painting, involves a lot of repetition, and repetition of various kinds. It almost gives me vertigo to realize how much repetition, but let me try to break it down.

Firstly, I look at the same things over and over—news images, advertising, the photos I take on my phone. Most people these days do this too, everyone is seemingly in some image loop, whether it's doomscrolling, retail therapy, online dating, or just Instagram. I am not better than this, but I do try to notice what I am doing when I am engaged in this repeated viewing. Mostly, I get a sense of stability when I notice some new grouping, something where repetition presents a conundrum, a promise, some emerging weirdness. Again, I am not interested so much in singular, one-off weirdness (the internet is overfull of those anyways) but in some emerging pattern.

For example, I was collecting images of teleprompters in news outlets, initially because I found them hidden away in funny places, these transparent rounded rectangles, always slanting slyly away from your consideration. I have a whole folder of these hidden teleprompters. Then, after the Democrats lost the 2024 presidential election, and news outlets were publishing their post-mortems, I noticed that many publications choose photos with conspicuous, awkward teleprompters as the main event, next to Biden and/or Harris. I probably wouldn't have noticed them in the spotlight if I hadn't been collecting them, tracking them, for months in the shadows. One single photo like this would mean "Ha, look at that teleprompter, which is normally hidden" but when five or six news outlets choose a teleprompter photo, it tells me something deeper might be going on. And this is what I like to explore.

Of course, we all look for images by type nowadays. When my daughter wants me to draw her a unicorn and we have to decide on some unicorn characteristics to use, we type "unicorn" into Google and start chipping away at what emerges. We click around within the type until we find the subtype that satisfies, maybe she wants rainbow rings, or it is crucial that the unicorn is running, and so on. And it is the same for me. I use the initial type that the algorithm provides, but what I am always really after is a subtype of what is initially presented, something that reveals what the algorithm or social media channels don't mean to show, and something that even the omnivorous search engine in fact misses, either because it's not easily tagged ("conspicuous teleprompter" doesn't get

you the key teleprompter images) or because what I am after is an image that is structured a certain way (big blurry shapes in front, for example), and this kind of compositional thinking is still outside the purview of Artificial Intelligence, circa 2026.

How do you think about repetition in your work?

Dushko Petrovich Córdova: Several years ago, I had a project called *In the Early Days of the Algorithm*, where I collected pairs of images that Twitter or Facebook had put together or stacked in the feed, where there was a strong visual similarity, a repetition that invited an interpretation. I thought of them as one-cut collages because the startling, revealing juxtaposition was already there—all I had to do was screengrab it. As with surrealist works, these algorithmic pairings often seemed to point towards some inner or deeper meaning, though in the social media version, the meaning usually seemed social rather than personal to the viewer or artist. Here what was repeated, whether it was a color, a shape, a particular point of view, allowed one to link two images together. Paradoxically, these pairings, which were pretty random in most aspects, interrupted the randomness of the social media feed and made one stop. Or at least they made me stop. (I noticed they made Martha Rosler stop too, as she was also collecting them and calling them "duplexes.") It was like an algorithmic syncopation. It was a momentary way out.

How do you think about repetition in your work?

Dushko Petrovich Córdova: The primary repetition in my painting work is to re-present a photograph as a painting, to reconstitute a digital image in paint, specifically, in my case, onto glass. This is referred to in art history as *sous verre*, French for "on glass," but I prefer to call it reverse painting, because that says more about the process, which involves painting front-to-back without revision,

putting on the gesso last. This draws on a long tradition of light-into-pigment projects dating from camera obscura in the Renaissance through photorealism and up to the present moment. I also think a lot about non-painting projects of image repetition, about the work of Sherry Levine and Zoe Leonard and of Dina Kellerman's *I'm Google* and Marc Fisher's publishing work as Public Collectors, to name a few.

Part of why I continue the project is because I don't quite know what, exactly, happens when you turn a photograph into a painting in this way. I do think it's akin to Impressionism, where an image was made to emphasize the actual seeing of it. A friend of mine jokingly called my paintings "digital plein air," but I can't disagree. I also think the paintings are related to the other impressionists, the impersonators. The painting shares certain well studied qualities with the photograph. And in my work, the evidentiary role of photography is a key part. In other words, I'm not just making it all up.

There are also mechanical repetitions in my work. The airbrush has a variable opening that allows for the pigment particles to pass through it with greater or lesser degrees of focus. This repeats the process that created the source photograph, where light was passing through a camera aperture controlled by the photographer to produce various degrees of focus. The glass screen that receives the pigment particles is similar to the way these images are eventually displayed on our phones or computers.

How do you think about repetition in your work?

Dushko Petrovich Córdova: I learned a lot from Leo Steinberg's famous argument about Robert Rauschenberg's flatbed picture plane. Steinberg focuses on the implied position of the viewer in these works and sees a break with Abstract Expressionism, which despite its own radicality, still implied a viewer who was standing upright in nature, contemplating something in front of them. Rauschenberg, on the other hand, is presenting you with materials and experiences not from nature but from culture. Steinberg

thought this implied a horizontal inclination of the viewer, where they are looking not out at a landscape but down, at a book. Nowadays we are all cocked very horizontally down at our phones, so this orientation is even more pronounced, but students still find it confusing. They think horizontality is about landscape versus portrait rectangles; they think it's about Pollock painting on the floor, or Rauschenberg putting things on the floor—all sorts of things. As a teacher, I often have to find an example to clarify a point like this and in this case, I came upon the repeated use of the same JFK image in Rauschenberg. I compare this presentation of JFK with traditional Presidential portraiture, where JFK would be painted in the Oval Office, with his hands on a globe or something. The repeated JFK in Rauschenberg is obviously something else. At a certain point the double image reminds students that the image would have been sourced from a newspaper, the Rauschenberg wasn't looking at JFK himself, he was looking at a picture of JFK. And everything clicks into place. Warhol of course did this much more programmatically especially with *Double Elvis*, and, then Richard Prince took it to a different register with works such as *Four Men Looking in the Same Direction*, and then Cindy Sherman took it even further in her film stills, where the repetition was implied, a kind of set up for her own punch lines about how she could be in the world.

The previous shift to a painting about a singular view, a singular moment, rather than a singular thing was achieved, paradoxically, via repetition. Pre-impressionist paintings, even landscape paintings, would have to present a certain condition of light, since there is really no way to paint a landscape without natural light or to represent a place at all times of day. But even if it looked like daybreak, high noon, or sunset the idea that the landscape was seen at a particular moment was only established by presenting it next to other particular moments, as in Monet's haystacks or Pissarro's many views from his apartment window.

And then there are the lower-case impressionists, the people who impersonate other people. I have always loved them because acting like Tom Cruise, for example, is pretty easy if you are Tom Cruise but if you are not Tom Cruise and you can act like Tom Cruise, just like Tom Cruise, it is amazing, uncanny. This kind of impressionism is even more impressive when it can cross lines of

race, gender, nationality, or generation. When for example, Jamie Foxx, suddenly morphs into Tom Cruise, or Martin Short is able to become, to embody, Bette Davis. It feels like sorcery, but as with all sorcery the process is actually very meticulous and mechanical. Some impressionists, like Bill Hader, or Steve Coogan, will sometimes explain their magic tricks, telling where, exactly the throat needs to be clenched in a particular way or what vowels are key to impersonating Al Pacino, or what aspects differentiate a run-of-the-mill Pacino impersonation from an exquisite one. My favorite genre is when this is put to the test and people impersonate someone to their face, because this is where a run-of-the-mill impersonation comes across as a rude, almost offensive, re-presentation of a person, while an accurate one can be sublime in its tribute, seeming to liberate even the subject of the impersonation from the bonds of identity. And then the deepest kind of impression is where the impressionist answers questions and improvises as the character they are imitating, so we realize that they have inhabited and understood not just their vocal and physical mannerisms, but their world view and personality, too. I find this sublime.

I am simply a fan of impressions, and I always have been. It was a mainstay in my family, where impersonating other people was an expected aspect of storytelling. And I still watch tons and tons of impressions on YouTube, which collects these things in ways that weren't possible in my youth. What separates impressions from any kind of acting is the fact that you are familiar with the person being impersonated, which is of course why celebrity impersonations are the most common form of impressions—everyone knows who is being imitated. Or maybe acting is fiction and impressions are non-fiction. Whatever it is, I have always been interested in this question of fidelity, of recognizability as a subset of representation more generally. For example, when students complain that drawing a hand is hard, that drawing a face is harder, that drawing a self-portrait is hardest, they are inadvertently providing a kind of hierarchy based on recognizability. If you were to draw a tire, say with six spokes instead of eight, people would hardly notice, but if you draw a hand with four fingers, nobody can miss it. And then if you draw an art school model's nose a bit too small it might not even register to you, but if you draw yourself or a friend this way, you will know something is wrong.

Being able to tell there is something wrong with how you drew your friend's nose is not the same as knowing what, exactly, is wrong, or how to fix it. But in my experience, this is the kind of knowledge that is achieved in painting and drawing, through a mixture of analysis, muscle memory, and trial and error. Different representational artists master this in different ways, but there is always a full-body process of analysis, cognition, and action going on, many hypotheses and corrections within a system of repetition.

I've been painting from photographs over the last few years, so I've thought a lot about how the photograph produces an image and how a painter does. On some level, it's the same: dispersions of light that are registered and made permanent as dispersions of pigments. But the camera does its repetition of reality mechanically, instantaneously. The human must go step by step, must understand and execute, consider and reconsider; squint, maybe cry a little bit; take the thing apart to put it back together. In short, the human must suffer through and also enjoy the repetition.

Does the viewer get all this? By osmosis? I don't really know. I've long since stopped being able to look at a painting without thinking about how it's made.

How do you think about repetition in your work?

Dushko Petrovich Córdova: I have a fantasy essay called "On On and On" about On Kawara that I keep planning to write. It works well on devotees of conceptual painting as a joke, but I owe Kawara a serious debt when it comes to linking the diaristic and the mimetic. Kawara famously painted dates and sent postcards to friends informing them simply that he was "still alive."

My bit, essentially, is that I keep looking at things longer than I am supposed to. My friend Dana Hoey, who is a great photographer, refers to photographs as "potato chips," things that are meant to be thoroughly and quickly enjoyed, probably for no good reason. That's an astute observation and the kind of thing a great photographer

gets to say about her medium, but my contention is that there is something interesting, sustaining, in those quick visual treats, so I trick myself in various ways to keep looking at them. Repetition is the disease. Perhaps repetition is also the cure?

How do you think about repetition in your work?

Julie Harting: Repetition exists on different levels. I use a limited number of rhythms and a limited number of discrete pitches (frequencies) in my music, so I repeat them. But I organize these pitches and rhythms to create larger structures such as motives, phrases, and ideas. Sometimes I repeat a motive, a phrase, an idea. If I do repeat, I will proceed to take the music to a different place. To me, this is the essence of the sonata form in European classical music. Except that in classical music—Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven—there is a return of the beginning at the end of the piece. Sometimes, I find myself repeating a musical idea from the beginning of the piece at the end of the piece. In that case, I think the repetition of the musical idea has a different meaning from when it was first heard. Hearing something (or experiencing something), going somewhere else, having different experiences and then hearing the earlier something again. In general, though, for me the point is to start somewhere and to go somewhere else. To not repeat what has already been experienced.

How do you think about repetition in your work?

Alex Jackson: For those committed to their own amorphousness, repetition is both truth and myth simultaneously. This double bind of truth and myth is birthed by the repeated actions of disruption, distortion, and stolen time of those who have instrumentalized their own mutability. The structure and evidence of repetition is calibrated through the manipulation of scale, volume, time, and distance. At the level of bodily experience, both microscopic scale and immensity can

render repetition imperceptible. In terms of volume, a single repeat is perceived as a mirroring or doubling of the original, while numerous, uncountable repeats come to be read as a unified structure. The illusion of structurelessness is choreographed by the meters of time and distance. The spacing between repeated units, or the rates of recurrence, disclose or conceal their patterned behavior. The fugitive listens closely to the repetitions of the grid and to those of the wild, and repeats only at intervals of untraceable spacetime. A Loophole of Repeat. Disappearance is the only pattern you will find.

How do you think about repetition in your work?

Sarah Hromack-Chan: I catch myself repeating myself all the time. My memory works in strange and mysterious ways: I have a twenty year-old mental catalogue of exchanges I've had with strangers on New York streets and trains. I could pick the two women who sat behind me in a screening of *In the Mood for Love* at Lincoln Center five years ago out of a lineup—my first post-pandemic lockdown film. Yet, I often forget that I shared an anecdote with a friend the last time we spoke, and so I'll repeat myself again. I experience aphasia sometimes. It's embarrassing. Someone diagnose me, please!

I started to type "I suffer from aphasia" just now, and I caught myself. Delete! In writing, it's easier to catch what I've forgotten—to nix repeated words or, more likely, syntactical patterns. In writing, being a relentless self-editor is my only hope. In life, I'm simply sorry.

How do you think about repetition in your work?

Kerry Downey: I've been working on a video with my therapist. In our Zoom session, I am making a mask out of my pulped high school love letters. At one point, I hold up a dripping pile of pulp in my hands; she tells me this is an image that reappears in almost all my work somehow. What's up with this repetition?

A pile of shit: My fecal gift of art is an exchange and plea for love, repetition compulsion, artists and their anal stages (S. Freud)

Substantive substance: My pliable medium, good for sensorial playing with reality, working with and tolerating my intensity, safely, to negotiate self and other (D. Winnicott, M. Milner)

Postharvest debris: Is my something nothing? I insist my insistence of what I insist be so vital, rhythmic presence, beginning again and again (G. Stein)

My abject effluvia: Cast out that which is not me, not mine, especially disgust and shame (J. Kristeva, G. Bataille)

An archive of ephemera: My identification with the scrap as the reject, marginalia; "traces, glimmers, residues, and specks"—queer gestures that vanish but leave a lasting impression (J. E. Muñoz, H. Love, A. Cvetkovich)

A heap of wreckage: History as one single catastrophe piling wreckage at our feet; my inheritance (W. Benjamin)

A compost heap: Working with waste or decay, my shadow material; in alchemical transformation, breakdown is breakthrough, fecundity; the numinosity of moving between disintegration and emergence (C. Jung)

How do you think about repetition in your work?

Eduardo Martínez-Leyva: In many ways, repetition is a paradox. It is the opposite of erasure; it amplifies, augments, and calls attention to what matters. It is the act of highlighting what we fear might be forgotten, preserving what is at risk of fading away. It is at the heart of storytelling and poetry; there can be no poetry without repetition, which gives it muscle and meaning. There's something beautiful and crushing about repeating a word or phrase: it's incantation, it's protest, it's comfort, it's madness, it's compulsion.

Repetition is the way I try to stitch words and lived experiences together, making music out of ache, shaping meaning into the spaces where language gets compressed. Returning to a place, an image, a person, a moment or an emotion. But there's also a fine line; an abundance of repetition makes the word or phrase lose impact. And so, a poem becomes a home to these echoes, sometimes contradictory. A double-edged sword I carry as both blessing and burden.

How do you think about repetition in your work?

Amanda Parmer: Repetition is such a slippery concept. I don't believe that it actually exists. Instead, I find that there is always difference, but it is easy to slide back into the illusion of sameness. For me this is where the work is, negotiating the belief that repetition is a fiction with the fact that this belief makes it real as an instructive instrument and flag to locate distinction.

How do you think about repetition in your work?

Katherine Behar: "NO REPETITION." That's what it says on a t-shirt that I've been wearing a lot lately. I feel a little sheepish about this shirt, not because of its slogan, but because it is art museum swag. Is it tacky for an artist to wear another artist's merch?

I acquired this shirt on a recent visit to Ljubljana's Cukrarna Museum which was showing a masterful survey of Ulay and Abramović's early collaborative works from the seventies and eighties. The show took its title, *ART VITAL*, from the duo's 14-phrase manifesto. A museum marketing team had reproduced the manifesto, divided line-by-line, to adorn all variety of touristic takeaways: pencils, pens, postcards, coffee mugs, ironic athletic socks, and—yes—t-shirts, all in a bold black and white colorway with tasteful typography. Evidently, I am their prime demographic; I couldn't resist the shopping.

As a young performance art student in the 1990s, I placed Ulay and Abramović in my pantheon of art heroes.[1] *ART VITAL* reminded me of how superlative their collaborative works continue to be. I found myself relating so deeply to these works that I wondered if I might be at a turning point in my own practice, where I might reincorporate some of this mode of simplicity and provisionally. Not a repetition, but perhaps a revisitation?

Mostly shown as documentation in Ljubljana, Ulay and Abramović's performances were guided by their manifesto's explicit principles. The results are daring experiments in modest vulnerability. I consider them defining, even. (Far more so, in my opinion, than subsequent solo endeavors which seek iconicity, sacrificing contingency, but I digress.) "NO REPETITION" was one such principle. Does sporting it mean I'm supporting it? Do I agree?

It depends.

Ulay and Abramović may have intended "NO REPETITION" in a parallel sense to another line in *ART VITAL*: "NO REHEARSAL." They set a score and conducted its action once and only once. Is it then odd that in more recent years, Marina Abramović has undertaken "reperformances" of her own and others' art historically noteworthy works? "NO REPETITION" also conveys a deeply presentist orientation in all performance art. The specific present tense of live art is never the same on two occasions.

This would appear to place performance at odds with digital practices which often take for granted the digital's capacity to proliferate endless exact copies, irrespective of time and place. In the early days of the Internet and personal computing, for instance, this was considered a promise of digital reproduction as distinct from Benjaminian mechanical reproduction. Copy and paste may be the digital's urform of repetition. Or at least this would appear to be the case when considering the digital from the perspective of data.

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[1] In *Attachments*, my contribution to *I Wish I'd Thought of That: Performance Art History Repeats Itself,* a group show I co-curated in 2001, I even selected their *Relation in Time* (1977) to reinterpret with Jeanne Dunning's *The Toe-Sucking Video* (1994)

What about from the perspective of an object? Certainly, much feminist STS scholarship highlights how digital data are themselves objects and depend on all manner of material variables from labor to ecology—but this isn't quite where I'm heading. It is overwhelmingly the case that today's production processes are integrated with (or at very least touched by) digital processes. So, from the ubiquity of digitality, the notion that the digital facilitates repetition seemingly rubs off on commodity culture more generally. With digital proliferation, what check on repetition remains? Even if we might desire variability, even if we are marketed bespoke personalization, we are awash in cultures of sameness, in turn underwritten by commodity culture writ large, which itself totally embraces repetition—from digital production methods churning tchotchkes, to the indistinguishability of tchotchke from tchotchke. Consider my shirt. Capitalism is what the digital repeats, and capitalism repeats itself.

The question of repetition (or no repetition) prompts me to see my sculptural work as bridging my backgrounds in performance art and digital new media art. In the past decade or so, making objects has become central to my practice. In my sculptures, I repeat digital forms and mass production forms (and digital mass production forms). As I write, I'm working on a new series I've been referring to as "one-offs." Like all my work, these repetitions are imperfect approximations. They fail to repeat.

At the risk of repeating myself, let me rephrase: my sculptures apply a performance art ethos of no repetition to a digital culture that is all repetition.

How do you think about repetition in your work?

Emily Wilson: The Wikipedia page on the Ship of Theseus has been edited so frequently that none of the original words remain. What is it to go on the same way? Can we step into the same river twice? Can we step even once? Does what's the same shift, depending where we look an how we hear? Is a rose a rose a rose a

rose a rose? How many dawns are touched by rosy fingers? Is every new birth the same? Is every difference a new birth? Is every repetition a new dawn?

How do you think about repetition in your work?

Craig Drennen: As Painter says in Act 1, scene 1 from *Timon of Athens*, "How shall I understand you?"

How do you think about repetition in your work?

Chang Yuchen: I inhale and exhale repeatedly, eat meals repeatedly, wash dishes repeatedly, sleep repeatedly, wake up repeatedly, step repeatedly, open and close doors repeatedly. I say hello repeatedly, how are you repeatedly, my name is repeatedly. The earth turns repeatedly. The sun and the moon too.

Didier William is a mixed-media painter whose work focuses on constructions of blackness that include the nuances of diasporic identity, and his own experiences of immigrating to the United States from Haiti.

C. Luke Soucy is a translator, classicist, and vocal Minnesota native. His translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (University of California Press, 2023) won the Raffaella Cribiore Award for Outstanding Literary Translation and was shortlisted for the National Translation Award in Poetry.

yuniya edi kwon is a violinist, vocalist, and interdisciplinary performance maker based in Lenapehoking, or New York City. Her practice connects composition, improvisation, movement, and ceremony to explore transformation & transgression, ritual practice as a tool to queer ancestral lineage, and the use of mythology to connect, obscure, and reveal.

Elvia Wilk is a writer and editor living in NYC. Her third book will be published in 2027.

Jen Liu is a New York-based visual artist working in video, painting, biomaterial and experimental programming, around topics of labor, diasporic Asian identities, and the ways in which technology features in both. In Liu's current body of work, *Future Perfect 888666*, various histories of invisible labor converge—Chinese American sex workers in the 19th century, AI microlaborers, and xenobots—revealing the underlying dreamlike logic of entanglement capitalism.

Jennifer Kabat's twinned memoir *The Eighth Moon* and *Nightshining* were published by Milkweed Editions in 2024 and 2025. Her writing has been in *Best American Essays, Frieze, The Believer, Granta, McSweeney's,* and *The Baffler*, and she serves in her rural fire department.

Amaryllis R Flowers makes weird stuff about fantasy and trauma, most notably nerikomi ceramic power figures for the existentially depressed, treasure maps, and comics.

Susan Morrrow is an Assistant Professor of German at Princeton working on performance, media studies, and intellectual history.

Justin Lieberman is an artist who subverts and reframes images from the media and popular culture to challenge the hierarchical systems ingrained in modern culture. This technique has been expressed in his work through the identifiable systems of advertising, furniture design, outsider art, home shopping television, art conservation, corporate franchises, and taxonomy exhibition.

Abby Kluchin is co-founder and Associate Director at Large of the Brooklyn Institute for Social Research and co-host of the *Ordinary Unhappiness* podcast.

Bronwyn Roe is an artist and writer in New York City.

Dushko Petrovich Córdova is an essayist, painter, publisher, and professor.

Julie Harting composes atonal music for soloists and various combinations of instruments.

Alex Jackson is an artist and writer in the Philadelphia area, forever working on *Color Theory for Ghosts*, a novel in three-dimensional space, each of its chapters unfolding in the form of an exhibition.

Sarah Hromack-Chan writes *Soft Labor*, a newsletter about the ever-changing nature of creative labor.

Kerry Downey (Ft. Lauderdale, 1979) is an interdisciplinary artist and teacher based in Kingston, NY. Their work explores embodied forms of experiencing, knowing, and transforming the world.

Eduardo Martínez-Leyva was born in El Paso, TX, to Mexican immigrants. His debut poetry collection, *Cowboy Park*, is the winner of the 2024 Felix Pollak Prize in Poetry from the University of Wisconsin Press.

Amanda Parmer is a writer, runner, former painter, and recovering curator living in Bed Stuy, Brooklyn with her pups, Bear and Leonora. She is currently writing about how our perception changes with our orientation and vice versa.

Katherine Behar is an artist and professor of new media arts at CUNY's Baruch College and The Graduate Center.

Emily Wilson is a classicist, author and translator. In 2018 her translation of Homer's *Odyssey* became the first by a woman into English verse.

Craig Drennen is an artist in Atlanta where he also manages THE END Project Space. He is represented by Brigitte Mulholland gallery.

Chang Yuchen works in an interdisciplinary manner—writing as weaving, drawing as translation, teaching as hospitality, commerce as social experiment (see Use Value) and publishing as a dandelion spreading its seeds.

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